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ABSTRACT

College and university students who live in campus residence halls are found to have a significant educational advantage over those who commute to campus, either from their parents' homes or from apartments or other off-campus housing. Residence hall dwellers are better off financially, educationally, and in other ways to begin with. Then, largely because of their greater involvement in various educational and developmental activities, they make significantly greater gains, particularly in nonacademic personal development. Methods for accommodating the special needs of commuters at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere are described. They include procedures and plans for dealing with transportation, food service, lounge space, and programming. The establishment at Minnesota of "dorm houses" and suburban study centers by the Institute of Technology is described. It is felt that these facilities have probably helped raise the performance and retention rate of each entering class since the mid-1960's. (LBH)

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photo by Gene Pearson

Taking the 'U' bus

Nearly 90 per cent of the 43,000 Twin Cities Campus students live off campus, many traveling to and from classes via the express bus system developed by the University and the Metropolitan Transit Commission. For more on services for commuting students, see page ten.

Researchers report

Commuting student lacks advantages of dorm resident

College and university students who live in campus residence halls have a significant educational advantage over those who commute to campus, either from their parents' homes or from apartments or other off-campus housing, according to several educational researchers. Residence hall dwellers are better off financially, educationally, and in other ways to begin with. Then, largely because of their greater involvement in various educational and developmental activities, they make significantly greater gains, particularly in nonacademic personal development.

Many researchers are attempting to identify factors in residential college life which contribute to student development, and are calling for institutions to look at ways they can extend some elements of the residential experience to commuting students.

This issue of *Comment* looks at what is being learned about residential and commuting students and what is being done to accommodate the special needs of commuters at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere.

Comment is the periodic publication of the University of Minnesota Center for Educational Development. James H. Werntz, Jr., Director. Gordon Wm. Kingston, Assistant Director. Andrew Ahlgren, Associate Director for Precollege Development. *Comment* is written and edited by Nancy A. Peterson.

How many commute?

Nearly 90 per cent of Twin Cities Campus students live off campus, according to the University of Minnesota Housing Office, which regularly studies residential distribution. The most recent available survey showed that in 1973-74, 27 per cent of Twin Cities Campus students lived with parents or relatives, 57 per cent in apartments or other off-campus housing. Eleven per cent lived in campus residence halls (5 per cent did not answer).

The Housing Office reports a slight decrease in recent years (in the neighborhood of 1 per cent per year) in the fraction of students living at home with parents or other relatives, and a similar increase in off-campus rental. The number of students living in residence halls began to dip during the late 1960's, but is up again (see "Dormitories full this year," page three).

Housing Office figures also show that as students advance in their academic careers, there is a progressive decline in the proportion living at home and in residence halls, and an increase in the popularity of apartments and other off-campus housing. Residence type also varies by college, as shown in the table on this page.

Nationally, researchers have been reporting (at least prior to the current resurgence in dormitory enrollments) that the proportion of students living in campus housing seems to be dwindling. David Trivett of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education reports in the June, 1974, *Research Currents* that there is not an evident increase in the number of students planning to live at home, but there is among students, particularly women, planning to live in apartments or other off-campus housing.

Researchers Mark Hardwick and Martha Kazlo, of the Office of Commuter Student Affairs at the University of Maryland, estimate that 75 per cent of all college students currently commute from their families' homes or from off-campus housing, and that 90 per cent will be doing so by 1985. A number of factors accompany this trend, although the significance of their relationships has not been documented: relaxation of residence requirements and reduced emphasis on residential facilities at many institutions, an increase in the importance of commuter institutions, and enrollment by greater numbers of "nontraditional" students—especially minority group, low-income, and older students.

Percentage Distribution of Residence Type by College

College	Live with parents/ relatives *(Avg: 27%)*	Apartment/ off-campus housing* *(Avg: 57%)*	University residence hall *(Avg: 11%)*
Agriculture	15	72	13
Biological Sciences	33	53	14
Business Administration	34	57	9
Dental Hygiene	23	58	19
Dentistry	6	82	12
Education	26	68	6
Forestry	30	61	9
General College	38	53	9
Graduate School	6	86	8
Home Economics	30	58	12
Institute of Technology	35	49	16
Law	12	81	7
Liberal Arts	37	50	13
Medical Technology	18	64	18
Mortuary Science	17	83	—
Nursing	11	86	3
Occupational Therapy	—	100	—
Pharmacy	30	59	11
Physical Therapy	20	60	20
Public Health	11	78	11
University College	28	72	—
Veterinary Medicine	2	96	2

*Includes categories of rent apartment, own or rent house, rent room, work for rent, married student cooperative, and private commune or coop.

Source: *Housing the University Student, 1973-1974*, published by University of Minnesota Housing Office.

Grant deadline Dec. 22

Applications for grants under the second and final round of the 1975-76 Small Grants Program, sponsored by the all-University Council on Liberal Education, will be accepted at the Center for Educational Development until Dec. 22.

Some $20,000 remains to support work aimed at improving undergraduate education. Proposals may be submitted by individual faculty members, faculty groups, and faculty-student groups. Further information is available from deans, directors, and department heads or the CED, 317 Walter Library, Minneapolis Campus, (612) 373-4537.

Why commute?

Students who choose to attend a local college rather than move away to attend school (a group largely though not entirely interchangeable with "commuters") most often cite proximity and low cost as major factors in their decision, according to Paul Dressel and Einar Nisula of Michigan State University (cited in June, 1974, *Research Currents*). Those who "go away" to school more often choose on the basis of particular programs and scholarships. Local attenders are more likely to work during college, and to work longer hours than those who go out of town (i.e., out of commuting distance) to college.

Researcher Herman Schuchman, cited in the same issue of *Research Currents*, suggests that in addition to financial reasons, students may choose to commute because they are not yet ready to leave home, because they are academically unable to attend a residential school, or because they are attracted to the action of an urban campus.

Comparing commuters and residents

A number of researchers have attempted to study how commuting students initially differ, if indeed they do, from residential students. Arthur Chickering, in his book *Commuting versus Resident Students*, reports on his studies with the American Council on Education, based on data collected between 1965 and 1970. His work provides much of the basis for the next three sections of this issue.

Chickering undertook two major analyses: multiple regression analyses examining attitudes and behavior of 5,351 students randomly selected from a 1968 national sample of 26,806 students who responded to questionnaires at the beginning and end of their freshman year; and analysis of responses to a survey of the next freshman class, which was completed by 160,000 freshmen entering 270 diverse two- and four-year colleges and universities (30% of the respondents were from public universities). Samples were weighted to generate nationwide figures and to permit conclusions to be drawn about specific types of institutions.

Dormitories full this year

Dormitories were full and dorm waiting lists long as University of Minnesota students began fall classes this year. On the Twin Cities campus, more than 250 students were waiting to get into residence halls. In Duluth and Crookston, students are being housed in local hotels and motels because of the shortage of both dormitory and off-campus housing.

The situation is similar across the country. Most college dorms were expected to be filled to near-capacity this fall, and some beyond normal capacity, according to the Association of College and University Housing Officers. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of Sept. 2, 1975, the association predicted a 98 per cent occupancy rate, equal to the rate reported last fall when an increase in dormitory applications reversed a four-year downward trend.

Enrollments generally were expected to be larger this year than last, according to the *Chronicle*. At the same time, there has been little construction of new dorms, in part because of the many empty rooms of the past few years and in part because population projections indicate substantially declining enrollment in the 1980's.

Reasons for the upturn in dormitory application cited by the association are the same as those cited by University of Minnesota Housing Office staff members. Although on-campus room and board rates have increased, inflation has boosted the cost of living off campus even more rapidly in some areas. Says Charles Lawrence, assistant to the director of the Twin Cities Campus Housing Office, "People are beginning to think living on campus is not as expensive, in comparison with living off campus, as they used to think it was."

In addition to food and rent, transportation is a major factor. With gasoline prices up, Lawrence said, students who might formerly have driven from cities as much as 75 miles away now are opting for the convenience of living on campus.

Also, dorm living generally has been made more attractive, with fewer restrictions and more programs designed to satisfy student interests. Changes in visitation and alcohol policies made three years ago by the University are typical of the trend. Dormitory residents now are allowed to have visitors in their rooms at any time and may legally drink in their rooms.

University of Minnesota dorm residents were asked their reasons for choosing to live on campus, in a survey distributed this fall by the Housing Office. Results, not yet available as this issue went to press, may be obtained from Betty Roe, coordinator of student-staff development at the Housing Office, 210 Comstock Hall, 373-7542.

In both the multiple regression analyses and the freshman survey results, Chickering found a consistent pattern of differences between students who live in residence halls and those living at home or off campus with respect to parental background and finances, high school achievements and experiences, college plans and future aspirations, anticipated college experiences and activities, and attitudes and beliefs. In the following discussion of his findings, it is important to remember that while most freshmen are eighteen years or older, 11 per cent of freshmen living at home or off campus are over twenty, compared with only 3 per cent of freshman residents.

Parental background and finances. Freshman residents more frequently grew up in the suburbs, commuters in moderate-size towns or cities or large cities. Chickering notes that these differences roughly express differences in parental, occupational, and educational backgrounds. Parents' income and educational level are both higher for incoming residents. Residents' fathers are more often businessmen, clergy, secondary school educators, doctors, and lawyers, while commuters' fathers are more often skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled workers. Residents are more often supported by parental and family financial aid, while commuters more often rely on savings or employment income.

High school achievements and experiences. Chickering found significant differences between residents and commuters in high school achievements, experiences, and activities. Eighteen per cent of residents graduated from high school with grade point averages of A-minus or better; 9 per cent of commuters did so. Averages of C-plus or lower were reported by 37 per cent of commuters and 25 per cent of residents.

Differences in academic achievement are accompanied by even more pronounced differences in extracurricular achievement. On Chickering's list of twelve possible items, freshman residents rated substantially higher on all but one. Differences are greatest for "was elected president of one or more student organizations," "won a varsity letter in sports," "edited the school paper, yearbook, or literary magazine," "had poems, stories, essays, or articles published," "had a major part in a play," and "was a member of a scholastic honor society." In the single exception, commuters slightly more often have won a prize or award in an art competition.

Repeating the pattern, residents outnumber commuters in having participated in 32 of 34 listed high school experiences and activities. The greatest differences, listed in descending order, were on these items: "tutored another student," "checked out a library book," "read poetry not assigned in a course," "discussed politics," "voted in a student election," "discussed religion," "discussed sports," "played a musical instrument," "asked a teacher for advice," "visited an art gallery," "worked on a local, state, or national political campaign," "arranged a date for another student," and "discussed my future with my parents."

'Basically, on a national basis, the residents are the haves and the commuters, the have nots.'
—Arthur Chickering
Commuting versus Resident Students

College plans and future aspirations. Substantially more commuters (61 per cent) than residents (38 per cent) had applied only to the college they were attending.

When asked to judge the value of several activities to their future lives, residents more frequently than commuters rated these items "essential" or "very important": "keep up with political affairs," "become a community leader," "develop a philosophy of life," "have friends different from me," and "influence social values."

On a nationwide basis, the proportion of commuters planning to end their formal education with an associate degree is three times that of residents (13 per cent versus 4 per cent). Substantially more residents (57 per cent) than commuters (43 per cent) plan to obtain a master's degree or higher.

Attitudes and beliefs. Chickering found differences in social and political attitudes between residents and commuters surprisingly small in view of their differences in other areas. On items concerning federal policies and other topics, the groups differed on very few. Where they did, residents generally reflected a more liberal viewpoint.

Differences among institutions. Analysis of the same data by type of institution reveals that differences between commuters and residents are greatest among public university students, tapering off and in some cases reversing among private universities and four-year and two-year colleges.

At *public universities*, freshman residents have substantial advantages over commuters with regard to parental occupation, income, and educational background, and with regard to high school achievements, experiences, and activities as well as long-range aspirations. The exception to the established pattern is that despite these differences, the two groups have similar degree plans.

Commuters in *private colleges and universities* were found to be financially and educationally better off than their commuting counterparts at public institutions. Yet there is still a large gap in background and preparation between them and their residential colleagues. And despite this gap, there is again little difference in degree aspirations. The commuters hope to achieve the same academic level as do the residents, who enter "with a strong head start," according to Chickering. "Educational practices in many of these institutions create competitive environments which commuters must enter with substantial handicaps in relation to the residents."

Public four-year colleges are an important exception to the established pattern. Here, parents' educational background, occupation, and income are similar for freshman residents and commuters. Moreover, commuters have more liberal attitudes than residents concerning federal policies and social issues, higher grade point averages in high school, and more honors and recognition for academic performance. Residents report more extracurricular achievements than do commuters.

In both *public and private two-year colleges*, differences tend to disappear, and the few that remain often reverse the established pattern. For example, in both public and private two-year colleges, residents tend to have had lower high school grades. In the public colleges, residents more frequently do not intend to continue beyond the associate degree. Chickering suggests that this "collapsing of the differences" may occur because entrants at two-year institutions, compared with their four-year counterparts, tend to be at a disadvantage on all the major areas tapped by the survey. "Therefore, there is not much room for them to differ from one another."

Chickering believes that differences in entering characteristics of residents and commuters are worth examining in detail because of their implications for educational policies and practices.

"It is by now a truism that the consequences of particular educational programs depend in large measure upon the characteristics students bring to them. Residents and commuters, who differ substantially in background, encounter similar curricular requirements, similar standards and grading practices, similar cultural pressures and institutional expectations. Because of differences at entrance, outcomes are different—not only in college experiences and activities but also in patterns of learning and development. And the gap between the two groups becomes larger rather than smaller."

He suggests that the solution lies in "recognizing the differences between commuters and residents" and "creating educational alternatives better suited to the characteristics of each." Some of his suggestions are discussed later in this issue.

The college experience

The activities and experiences which make up the educational process differ, sometimes dramatically, for residents and commuters. Chickering analyzed data measuring change in attitudes and behavior both during the freshman year and during the total college career.

The freshman year

Analyzing change during the first year of college, principally through the multiple regression analyses referred to earlier, he found that students who lived at home with their parents participated in cultural and extracurricular activities less frequently than dormitory residents, and that their relationships with faculty members and fellow students were more limited. Students who lived at home were less satisfied with their college and less frequently planned to return or to study fulltime. The experiences and activities of students living in apartments or other off-campus housing were more similar to the commuters living at home than to dormitory residents.

These differences occurred in both public and private institutions, and in two- and four-year colleges as well as universities, and they occurred regardless of institutional size and selectivity. Patterns remained the same even though general levels of activity varied from one type of institution to another. For example, both commuters and residents are more frequently guests in a teacher's home at the Protestant and Catholic colleges than either group at any other type of institution. Regardless, *within each type of institution*, residents make more such visits than their commuting counterparts.

Chickering finds this consistency across different types of institutions worth special attention. It should be recalled that his studies reveal differences in characteristics among entering freshmen at different types of institutions, and shifting patterns of relationships between commuters and residents.

"A good deal of research, carried out principally by (Alexander W.) Astin (now at UCLA) and his

associates at the American Council on Education, has demonstrated that the outcomes of college depend heavily on the characteristics students bring with them at entrance," Chickering says. "The findings from these studies of commuters and residents in different types of institutions, however, indicate that the differences in their college experiences remain consistent, despite the shifting patterns of relationships between the two groups when their entering characteristics are considered. Therefore, it seems clear that for these subgroups, at least, major aspects of the college experience are independent of student characteristics at entrance."

Total college career

Findings of Chickering's studies of experiences and activities for the students' total college career, again based on ACE data, are consistent with his findings about the freshman year, and provide some interesting and illustrative details.

Commuters who live with their parents *more frequently flunk a course and are on academic probation*; they *less frequently take courses on a pass-fail basis or participate in an honors program or ROTC*. Compared with dormitory residents, they *less often do extra reading, check out a book or journal from the college library, study in the library, type a homework assignment, or argue with an instructor in class.* They *more often fail to complete an assignment on time* and *more often come late to class.* They *much less frequently discuss schoolwork with their friends or read books not required.* "In general," Chickering concludes, "students who live at home with their parents appear to be less fully engaged in academic activities than their dormitory peers."

Students who live in private off-campus housing fall between the other two groups, with some exceptions in keeping with what might be seen as their more independent nature. For example, they more frequently argue with instructors in class and read books not required for courses. Although they flunk courses in about the same proportion as students who live at home, they take pass-fail courses at about the same rate as dormitory students. Apartment dwellers also lead the three groups in having social or academic conversations with their major professor.

Although all three groups report similar numbers of friends, commuters report fewer close friends at their college and more close friends either at another college or not in college. Students living at home least frequently join a fraternity or sorority and least frequently report having fallen in love. Dormitory residents generally score highest on items concerning social relationships with other students, although students who live in private off-campus housing more often date, drink beer, attend parties, and stay up all night.

Commuters living at home scored lower than dormitory residents on 24 of 27 listed extracurricular activities and experiences, such as tutoring, reading unassigned poetry, attending a play, or participating in a college organization. The two major exceptions were playing chess and watching television. Commuters living at home watch television once or twice a week or nearly every day in larger proportions (39 per cent) than do dormitory residents (24 per cent).

"The divided life"

Whatever the value one might place on those specific extracurricular activities cited by Chickering, it does become obvious from his statistics that commuters, particularly those who live at home, are less involved than dormitory residents in activities generally thought of as part of the traditional college or university experience.

A major reason for this might be the large amount of time commuters must spend working and traveling to and from campus. At Wayne State University, for example, the typical commuter spends six hours a day working or commuting. (At the University of Minnesota, employment statistics have not been compiled separately for commuting and residential students. A Student Life Studies report shows that 79 per cent of all University of Minnesota students say they work at some time during the academic year (90 per cent do so during the summer). Of those who are employed, 26 per cent work on campus, 69 per cent off campus, and 5 per cent both on and off campus. The Housing Office reports that of all Twin Cities Campus students who were employed during 1973-74, roughly a fourth worked 15 or fewer hours each week; a fourth worked 16 to 20 hours; another fourth

'Students who live at home with their parents appear to be less fully engaged in academic activities than their dormitory peers.'
—Arthur Chickering
Commuting versus Resident Students

worked 20 to 50 hours, and, surprisingly, a fourth worked 51 hours or more each week.)

Student choice of courses may well be dictated by a student's work and commuting schedule, and extra academic activities, such as field trips, may be hard to accommodate, quite apart from the question of nonacademic activities. Richard Ward and Theodore Kurz, who have studied commuters at Wayne State University, characterize the commuter's situation as "the divided life," with the division visible in the schedule, the environment, and the facilities. Like Chickering and others, they believe the commuter receives little support at home for new political and social ideas and has little opportunity to develop friendships with faculty and fellow students.

Assessing educational outcomes

Consistent differences in background and in college experiences and activities between residents and commuters would seem to point to consistent differences in changes during college. Chickering reports on data collected by the American Council on Education which in many ways bears this out.

After one year

One set of analyses compared student responses after one year of college with scores predicted for those same students on the basis of information from the ACE questionnaires they had completed as entering freshmen plus information provided by the students' institutions. Differences between predicted and actual scores were examined for students living at home, those in off-campus housing, and those in dormitories.

On a set of data involving a variety of competence items, Chickering found "striking internal consistency" among the items within each living group. In all but two cases (sewing and baking), actual scores were lower than predicted scores for students living with their parents, and higher than predicted scores for students living in dormitories. "These changes occurred even though the *predicted scores in every case were lower for students living at home* and *higher for dormitory students*. The differences in predicted scores arose primarily from the fact that at entrance the dormitory students more frequently demonstrated these competencies than students living at home.

"To put it briefly, then, at entrance, dormitory students report a wider range of competence than students living with parents; during the freshman year the range for dormitory students expanded and the range for commuters living at home shrank." Students living in off-campus housing fall between the other two groups.

Similarly, on fourteen of nineteen activity items, actual scores for home-dwellers fell short of predictions while actual scores for residents exceeded them. (Again, predicted scores for dormitory students were higher than those for commuters.) For instance, home-dwellers tutored, studied with other students, saw foreign movies, took trips, and were guests in teachers' homes less frequently than predicted, residents more often. Thus at entrance commuters are generally "less disposed to enter various educationally and developmentally useful activities and experiences," and the differences between the two groups grow during the freshman year.

Chickering's data also shows, however, that students who lived in off-campus housing were the only group whose freshman grade point averages exceeded predictions. Averages of students living at home fell slightly short, those of dormitory residents even shorter (although both predicted and actual grade point averages of residents were higher than those of the other two groups).

Both commuters living at home and those in off-campus housing reported less satisfaction with their colleges and less likelihood of returning for full-time study than predicted on the basis of their entering characteristics, while residents exceeded predictions on those items.

After four years

Chickering examined other ACE data to measure changes in goals, behavior, and attitudes four years after entering college.

Of most interest is the data relating to degree and career plans. About 14 per cent of the students who lived at home during their most recent college term say they intend to obtain an associate degree or no degree at all, compared with 3 per cent of those living in off-campus housing and 9 per cent of those in dormitories. Thirty-nine per cent of the resident students intend to obtain master's degrees, compared with 30 per cent of those living with parents. Sixteen per cent of students in private off-campus housing intend to earn "other professional" degrees, in contrast to 10 per cent of the other two groups. "Interestingly," says Chick-

ering, "the proportions who aim for a Ph.D. or Ed.D. degree are roughly equal."

Career expectations and preferences differ for the three groups. Students living with their parents more often expect careers in engineering and the sciences and less often expect careers in teaching, psychology, or social welfare. Students in other private housing more frequently expect careers in law, college teaching, or as business executives. Dormitory residents represent the largest proportions planning to do elementary or secondary teaching, and homemaking. (Chickering notes that in all three groups, about half as many persons prefer a homemaking career as expect to pursue it.)

In general, these and other differences among residential groups after four years of college—in long-range goals, self-perceptions, and attitudes and beliefs—are consistent with the characteristics of the various groups of students at entrance and the directions of change observed after the first year of college.

Might not these differences in educational outcomes, however, be due to the characteristics of the students upon entrance to college rather than to the college experience itself? Multiple regression analysis of the data attempts to take account of some of those characteristics and to reveal the extent to which changes may be attributed to the college experience itself, above and beyond the changes that would be predicted simply on the basis of the differences in backgrounds, abilities, values, and interests that were evident as entering freshmen. (The multiple regression correction has its limits, course: the critical variable may not have been included, or the mathematical model used might be too simple. There is no way to adjust for what may be the most important initial characteristic—the choice to commute.)

Such analysis shows that resident students surveyed as freshmen and again four years later consistently exceed predictions in their degree plans, while both commuters who live at home and those who live in apartments fall short of predictions based on their background characteristics.

When long-range plans are subjected to regression analysis, differences emerge between commuters who live at home and those in off-campus housing. Those who live at home shift to greater emphasis on financial well-being and away from concern about keeping up to date with political affairs and concern for creating artistic works. For commuters in off-campus housing the dominant shifts primarily reflect a concern for independence, with emphasis either on being successful in a business of their own or on creating artistic works, both accompanied by a shift away from concern for financial well-being. The pattern for residents is still different, reflecting diminished concern for financial well-being, business success, and obligations to others, and increased orientation to artistic creativity, social contributions, and keeping up to date with political affairs.

Changes in self-perceptions also are interesting. Students living with parents rank themselves lower than predicted on academic and leadership ability, self-confidence, social self-confidence, popularity in general, and popularity with the opposite sex. They are the only group to rank themselves lower on "cheerfulness," and they do so to a significant degree.

Commuters living off campus rank themselves significantly higher than predicted on academic, artistic, mathematical, and mechanical ability. They also rank themselves higher on intellectual and social self-confidence and on popularity with the opposite sex, and lower on "drive to achieve."

Dormitory residents rank themselves significantly lower than predicted on mathematical and mechanical ability and on leadership ability, and higher on sensitivity to criticism. They rank themselves significantly higher on popularity and social self-confidence. Rankings on academic ability and intellectual self-confidence show little change.

Changes in degree plans, long-range plans, and self-perceptions are accompanied by what Chickering calls "dramatic and highly consistent" contrasts in behavior. Participation in social, cultural, and miscellaneous activities was less than predicted for commuters, greater for residents. The reverse was true for religious activities.

Dropping out

Relationships between type of residence and dropout rates were studied by Alexander W. Astin and reported in his book, *Preventing Students from Dropping Out*. Actual dropout rates for freshmen entering in 1968 who lived in various residences were compared with expected dropout rates computed from the students' entering freshman characteristics and from the variables of financial aid, work situation, and type of college.

Although the magnitude of impact of residence type on dropout possibilities varies somewhat from one type of institution to another, living in a dormitory as a freshman appears to decrease the student's chances of dropping out by approximately 10 per cent in comparison with most alternative residences.

Astin suggests that his findings may have implications for administrators and policy-makers. "Perhaps policy-makers should reexamine current trends toward reduced allocations for construction

photo by Gene Pearson

Study space

Increased space for studying between classes is an important consideration in the planning of new buildings, and the remodeling of existing ones, such as Coffman Memorial Union, where these students studied in the renovated ground floor area (see page eleven).

of residential facilities and rapid expansion of commuter colleges. College administrators who control these facilities might reconsider whether abandoning required residence for undergraduates is as beneficial as some claim."

To test whether required dormitory living for those who might not otherwise choose it would still have the same effect on dropout rates, Astin looked at data for commuter colleges (those in which fewer than 10 per cent of the freshmen lived in dormitories), voluntary residential colleges (those in which between 10 and 90 per cent lived in dormitories), and required-residence colleges (in which more than 90 per cent of freshmen lived in dormitories). The expected and actual dropout rates for the three types of institutions "show clearly...that the beneficial effects of dormitory living are not compromised by a residence requirement."

Astin also found that regardless of type of institution, living in a private room or apartment rather than with parents is beneficial to men and detrimental to women in terms of dropping out. He suggests that differences in the degree of personal autonomy and independence accorded men and women during their high school years may be a factor. Among college freshmen, the typical man may already have had more opportunities to be away from home and to act independently than the typical woman. For some women, the change in degree of autonomy between living at home and living in an apartment or rented room may be too dramatic. The resulting stress not only may detract from ability to cope with academic work but may also pressure them to leave college for the more supportive home environment.

Although only a small percentage of freshmen live in fraternity and sorority houses, Astin found their chances of dropping out even more greatly reduced than those of dormitory residents. Students in fraternity and sorority houses may be even more involved in peer relationships and campus social life than dormitory residents, involvement which Astin found beneficial in reducing chances of dropping out.

Astin urges that colleges and universities, though not usually in a position to undertake the independent construction of new residential facilities, make every effort to fill existing ones. "Those colleges with under-utilized residences can attract more students to live on campus by reducing costs, improving facilities and programming, or instituting required campus residence."

Since dropout rates for women are generally increased by living in a private room or apartment, he suggests that favoring women over men in allocating residential facilities may be justified, partic-

ularly if the woman applicant unable to find a place in a dormitory will be forced to live in private off-campus housing.

He also questions the practice of favoring students who come from long distances in allocating available residential facilities. The justification for the policy is usually economic: students living in the same town can presumably live at home if they wish. In fact, Astin says, the local student denied a place in a residence hall very well may live at home, in the process increasing the chances of dropping out. "If local students are not to be favored, then a policy of nondiscrimination in relation to distance from home seems the most equitable and also the easiest to justify in terms of likely educational outcomes."

(The University of Minnesota used to require that dormitory residents be from homes at least eight miles from campus. The policy was dropped several years ago when dorm applications fell off. There is now no policy of preference for any student group, according to Housing Office staff members.)

Meeting commuters' needs

A number of institutions have undertaken research of their own to better understand commuters' problems and are experimenting with programs to help meet at least the most obvious of their special needs.

Around the country

At the University of Maryland, the Office of Commuting Student Affairs is responsible for identifying problems faced by commuters, devising ways they can take advantage of educational opportunities, and otherwise looking out for their interests. Areas in which the office might seek improvements, for example, are parking, transportation, food, security, lounge space, and communication and orientation.

In addition, the office operates the National Clearinghouse for Commuter Programs, which has attempted to assess the awareness of commuter student problems nationally. Results of its surveys suggest that universities are not aware of the number of commuters, their travel arrangements, or special services that might be necessary or helpful. The clearinghouse has published bibliographies on commuter students and is publishing a newsletter, *The Commuter*.

At the University of Alberta, Edmonton, the growth of the city and a doubling of enrollment resulted in growth in the number and proportion of commuting students. The university has produced a series of studies, based on questionnaires and direct observation, on transportation patterns of commuters, study facilities, lounge space, food facilities, and recreation space.

Studies done at Wayne State University resulted in recommendations for widely dispersed campus study facilities with quiet and good lighting, and specially designed eating and socializing places to promote social and intellectual interchange. Other recommendations were that shops and studios be available when commuters need them, that overnight facilities be provided for occasional use, and that mailboxes be used to facilitate better communication with commuters. Larger scale suggestions include "outpost centers" or suburban meeting areas which would have study and social facilities.

Chickering makes a variety of recommendations, some aimed at making information and resources more accessible to commuters, others aimed at more closely tailoring the educational process to the commuter's needs and aspirations. Most notably, he suggests that a variety of short-term residential experiences could be built into regular courses or seminars, or could be held periodically for students with similar academic or general interests. He also urges increased use of an "open-ended" educational approach incorporating individually designed programs, individual learning contracts (particularly those which draw upon community resources and on-the-job experiences), programmed learning materials, readings, audiovisual materials, and fieldwork. In addition, he suggests a more concerted effort to make information available to students through strong orientation programs, clearly worded institutional publications, and directories of campus and community resources. Such steps would benefit all students, but especially commuters, who have less access to the campus grapevine than dormitory residents.

At Minnesota

No single University of Minnesota office bears responsibility for concerns of the commuting student. However, since some 90 per cent of Twin Cities Campus students live off-campus, their needs are necessarily taken into account in the

provision of such non-academic services a transportation, parking, food, lounge space, and special programming.

Transportation. A University express bus system, a free computerized carpool matching service, and an off-campus park-and-ride lot on the intercampus bus line all are part of the University's attempt to relieve traffic congestion as well as competition for campus parking spaces.

The express bus system, developed by the University and operated by the Metropolitan Transit Commission, carries students, faculty, and staff to campus from all parts of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Operating expenses are shared by MTC and the University. Ridership has grown from an initial 115,000 in 1970-71 to 308,000 last year (an estimated 1,500 to 1,600 riders per day), a rate of growth "practically unheard of" in transit systems using buses, according to University Transit Coordinator Roger Huss.

Applications for computerized carpool matching are distributed to students with registration materials, and to faculty and staff with paychecks at the beginning of each quarter. The computer tries to match applicants on the basis of starting point and destination, preferred arrival and departure times, and whether the persons wish to ride or to drive. Applications have fluctuated since the program began in 1972-73 but appear to be on the upswing this fall with 1,300 applicants, some 9.5 per cent more than a year ago.

One further innovation is the 700-space park-and-ride lot at 29th and Como Avenues, where commuters may park free and ride the intercampus bus for 15 cents to either the Minneapolis or St. Paul Campus.

Food services. The University's Food Services, which include vending operations, also are seen as a service to the commuting public—students, staff, and faculty. Food service operations have grown as the number of people on campus has grown, and as buildings have been added which accommodate large numbers of people (such as the West Bank Classroom Building and the Health Sciences units), according to Roger Moe, executive assistant in the University's office of support services.

In addition, many existing food facilities have been renovated both to improve their appearance and to provide an atmosphere more conducive to conversation. "We know students gather in eating places to relax and talk," said Moe. "That's a hard thing for food service people to live with (quick turnover of customers is a maxim in the food industry), but we have tried to be realistic and to provide for that in our renovations." An example is the removal of long tables in some dining areas on the St. Paul Campus in favor of square and round tables better suited to conversation.

Lounge space. Space for students to relax, talk, eat a bag lunch, or study between classes is a consideration in the planning of new buildings and the renovation of existing ones. Provision of such space is a major factor in the current renovation of Coffman Memorial Union on the East Bank. Remodeling of the ground floor includes a large central area of tables and vending machines, while on the first floor new lounge space has been created by converting the former foyer and by enclosing a third of the outdoor terrace.

Programming. Where students live is seen by University staff members as a factor in student participation in campus activities. Diane Skomars, director of student activities, said that although no formal documentation exists to prove the point, she and other staff members believe the preponderance of students who are heavily involved in student activities live in dormitories or fraternity and sorority houses, or in the neighborhoods very near campus.

In addition, the large numbers of students who travel to campus from long distances influence the scheduling of campus programs and activities. A

Students widely dispersed

Studying the distribution of Twin Cities Campus students living off campus in 1973, the Housing Office found the heaviest concentrations in the Southeast Minneapolis (4,483) and West Bank (1,615) areas near the Minneapolis Campus and in the St. Anthony Park-Como Park (1,488), South St. Anthony-Midway (1,070), and Lauderdale-Falcon Heights-Roseville (1,282) areas near the St. Paul Campus. Students also are widely dispersed throughout the older residential sections of Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as the surrounding suburban communities.

The Transit Services Office in winter, 1975, asked students how many miles they regularly traveled to the Twin Cities Campus. The largest group, 37 per cent, travel 5 miles or less (this in addition to the 10 per cent who live on campus); 22 per cent travel 6 to 10 miles; 13 per cent 11 to 15 miles; 8 per cent 16 to 20 miles; and 10 per cent 21 miles or more.

The Transit Services Office also found that 50 per cent of Twin Cities students travel to campus by auto, 23 per cent ride a bus, 22 per cent walk, 4 per cent ride a motor bike, and 1 per cent hitch hike. Similar figures were reported by a 1974 Office of Student Activities opinion poll.

study done by the staff of Coffman Memorial Union showed the most popular times for programs to be from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays. According to Rufus Simmons, CMU director, "it takes a very powerful program to get students to come back to campus in the evenings or on weekends." For that reason, evening and weekend programming at the union generally consists of "high interest" events such as films, concerts, and attractions at The Whole coffeehouse.

The IT approach

One University of Minnesota unit which has focused upon the *academic* needs of commuters is the Institute of Technology. A study in the mid-1960's compared the academic performance of IT students having similar high school profiles; according to Assistant Dean Paul Cartwright it was "very obvious" that dormitory students were doing better than commuters in terms of both grade point and retention.

To encourage dormitory residency and help maximize the advantages of the experience, IT in 1968 set up four "dorm houses"—sections within University residence halls set aside to house 50 IT students each. A top upper division student was selected as a "live-in tutor" for each unit, receiving board and room through funds provided by private industry. Although psychologists warned against isolating students within a single discipline, Cartwright believes that social development of the dorm house students actually has been facilitated by their sharing of similar interests.

Even more important than the dormitory program is IT's program of suburban study centers. Two nights each week, students meet at six area high schools to study together or receive tutorial assistance, again from selected upper division students. A tutor also is available at the IT undergraduate office, and extra tutors visit the dorms to relieve the load on the live-in tutors. "We would double the program if we had the funds," says Cartwright.

He said the program has several advantages: it makes academic assistance accessible to commuting students; it provides some financial support for top students while in many cases developing their interest in teaching or in a particular technological field; and the tutors serve as a channel for feedback from students.

Academic performance of commuters and residents has not been restudied, but the performance and retention rate of each entering class has steadily risen since the mid-1960's. While other factors enter in, Cartwright credits the dorm house and suburban tutoring programs with a large measure of that improvement. The success of these programs, which have served as models for other institutions, raises the hope that other units of the University of Minnesota might similarly address themselves to the academic implications of student residence.

comment

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